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ABSTRACT

A number of language classroom activities designed to incorporate the senses into the English-as-a-Second-Language learning process are described. The strategies used involve group problem-solving, role-playing, information-gap activities using drawing and visual aids, the Total Physical Response approach, student-developed illustrations, games and quizzes, peer tutoring, and inclusion of multisensory activities. Related classroom issues are discussed briefly, including student literacy level, aiming at grammatical accuracy rather than language fluency, and promoting independent language learning. a brief list of references is included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR ESOL LITERACY

OVERVIEW OF INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

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Many of the activities described herein incorporate all of the senses into the learning experience. Role play, drawing, television and music are more than just "nice touches." We have different ways of learning and relating to new information. Textbooks can do but so much in the process of language learning and acquiring knowledge about culture and history. Some of the participants in the program may have had some English instruction in their countries. Usually, this instruction followed a structural or grammar syllabus, i.e. First you learn the present tense, and then the past, present perfect, etc. This kind of syllabus may provide learners with some knowledge about language, but doesn't usually provide much communicative competence. How many of us studied Spanish in high school -- conjugated verbs, memorized dialogues, and learned vocabulary, but still don't understand Spanish when spoken to us? When we incorporate all of our senses into the learning process, we will learn more and learn it better.

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES:

Group problem solving: Two textbooks Decisions and Can't Stop Talking provide formats for groups of 3 or 4 students to talk together to find solutions to problems (particularly for high intermediate or advanced students.) While these lessons are not specific to a Civics/History content, you can create your own lessons around the objectives of this curriculum, following the same format.

Role plays: By role play we don't mean learning pre-written dialogues. Rather have students role play situations that reflect the content being covered. If students enact situations around the Bill of Rights it will help them to personalize the information being learned, and at the same time, they will practice English. Both problem solving activities and role plays are good because they can be made relevant to the needs of the participants in the class. They might develop out of discussions of housing, schools, work, etc.

Information gap activities: This approach uses pairs of students working together. One member of the pair has part of the information, and the other member has the rest of the information. Their task is to communicate the information to each other so that they will solve a problem. Many of these activities are found in the text Talk-A-Tivities.

Draw Me a Picture. One example is to give one student a picture. The other student has a blank piece of paper and a pencil. The student with the picture has to describe the picture so that the other student will be able to draw it. (Obviously, the complexity of the picture will depend on the proficiency of the participants.) Selecting a picture that depicts a historical event might be a good introduction to a unit. Do this activity

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with the flag of the U.S. or flags of other countries; this leads to a discussion of what the symbols on flags represent. For beginning level students, you may need to introduce appropriate vocabulary first.

Picture Differences. Students working in pairs, have two pictures one slightly different from the other. Without looking at each other's pictures -- just by describing the pictures to each other, students need to find the differences. Again, use a picture that depicts an historical event for Student A. Alter the picture with White Out, and give the altered picture to Student B. This might start a discussion of what the real events were.

Map Activities. Using two maps, with different locations marked on each map, students give each other directions to find the different locations, i.e., the capital, the 13 original colonies, etc.

Total Physical Response: This approach focuses a great deal on listening comprehension. Students begin by following commands like "Stand up," "Turn around," "Raise your left hand, etc."

The book Action English Pictures has many of these kinds of activities with a detailed description of procedures. In Fiona Armstrong's videotape, we see how she makes this an integral part of every lesson with commands like "Go to the board. Take the blue chalk. Write your last name. Now write your first name. Take the paper from the third shelf."

One citizenship text uses this principle with activities like "This is a picture of the flag. Count the stars. Write the number of stars above the flag. Count the stripes. Write the number of stripes below the flag. Write first name on the bottom stripe. Write your last name on the top stripe." This activity would be preceded by a vocabulary lesson introducing the new words. Similar activities could be done with maps of the United States.

Drawing out: The book Drawing Out provides some wonderful examples of how having a concrete picture that reflects the students' perceptions of the world can be a source of language development. The authors suggest that :

> "visual communication is universal and international; there are no limitations of pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar. Visual language can be perceived and conceived by the literate as well as the preliterate... In addition to the affective significance of these activities, they are designed to tap the visual and kinesthetic resources of each student as an aid toward cognitive language development by providing cues for conversation, narrative, written passages and journal work. They also reinforce vocabulary items and grammar patterns of the new language."

Students' drawings can be used to depict historical events. When students make a drawing of a historical event, they are not constrained by limited vocabulary or grammar. Later, that picture can be used as a stimulus for developing the language needed to tell the story.

A variation of this activity would be to have students collect pictures, ads and campaign flyers, etc. that illustrate the events, people, places or holidays they are studying. These illustrations can provide the stimulus for language development around the content.

Visual displays: Particularly for students with limited formal schooling, it is helpful to base the unit on a timeline of U.S. History, from the 16th century to today. This timeline helps to create an orientation for relating one event to another. Display each section and help the class to build a display around it. This could be done on a bulletin board or a portable display on a large sheet of oak tag or cardboard.

Start by brainstorming what students already know about the event or period in history. Include their questions, information taken from children's encyclopedias, graphs, ads and commercials, pamphlets, lyrics from songs, greeting cards, bills and coins, all drawn from the myriad ways in which our society reflects its history and government.

Games & Quizzes: Use games and quizzes to help students to memorize facts they need to know. Let them peer test one another on a few important facts each week or month. Let them listen to tapes of the questions and answers from the citizenship test until they become accustomed to hearing and using the vocabulary of civics. Index Card Games for ESL will give you many ideas for games which can be developed for memorizing vocabulary and facts.

Peer tutoring: If you have open-ended enrollment, pair new students with a partner who is responsible for tutoring them on what they have missed. They can put questions and answers on flashcards to check one another. The teacher should regularly recycle and review the information, using different activities each time. Set up testing stations where students choose their questions and test the rest of the class on different facts.

Include multisensory activities: When scheduling and transportation permit, try to include trips to museums or historical buildings, arrange for students to meet their representatives or watch local government in action. Foods associated with holidays and immigrant groups can be the center of many language learning activities (have students guess the ingredients or find out where those ingredients come from.) Have students listen to and sing songs connected with periods of U.S. history. Use maps and pictures that show the whole country and the people as they are and were.

ISSUES:

Literacy: There may be individuals in the class who have had little or no

schooling. Try to be sensitive to that fact by providing activities that are accessible to students whether or not they can read and write. That's one reason why activities like "Draw me a Picture" are so useable with diverse groups.

Accuracy vs. fluency: If the goal of the class is to improve communicative ability on the part of the learners we need to look at the effects of too much correcting by the teacher. Part of acquiring a language involves making mistakes. Just as we expect that a child will stumble as they take their first steps, adults' initial attempts at producing a new language will produce what is known as *interlanguage* or "the speech of second language learners at any point of the learning process" (John H. Schumann in the foreword to Drawing Out). We are not comparing adult language learners to children; rather we are comparing the processes of learning a language and learning to walk. If children aren't permitted to take risks and stumble they probably won't walk very well. Similarly if adults aren't given ample room to make mistakes they probably won't develop much fluency. They need to develop their own strategies for understanding and making themselves understood.

Becoming independent language learners: Part of the curriculum needs to focus on giving students their own strategies for learning language. One of the things that makes New York fascinating for tourists is its ethnic neighborhoods. It also makes it a little easier for people coming to the U.S. to live in a neighborhood where their language is spoken, shops and restaurants sell the kinds of food they enjoy, and the customs are not so alien to them.

But what makes life a little easier, makes learning English a lot harder. There are limited opportunities in many neighborhoods to practice English. Therefore people who are serious about learning English have to make their own opportunities to practice. Here are a few ideas, but students should be encouraged to brainstorm their own strategies.

a. Encourage students to try restaurants where their language isn't spoken. (You may want to do some field work to find restaurants where waiters are patient enough to listen to a students' initial attempts at ordering food, and are willing to explain what different things are on the menu.)
b. Have students try to find someone in their neighborhood (maybe a retired person) who is willing to speak English to them.
c. Assign students to watch TV with a checklist of famous people and places to check off when they see them.
d. Use the newspaper and magazines, even if students can only circle the relevant words in a headline, caption or an article, or scan for names, places, dates, ages, etc. For those students who have literacy skills in their native language, they have frequently been exposed to the content of newspaper articles in native language publications. After they have scanned an English-language article

for names, places, dates, etc. discuss the major points of the article. Students can work together to dictate or write their own version of the information in the article.

e. Have students call information numbers once a day, i.e.,
weather, time, information
car-rental agencies to find prices
mail order companies to find the price of certain products (Don't buy the product unless you like it)
local movie theatres to find what's playing and the times
some pay numbers -- horoscope, etc.

f. Students can listen to conversations on the subways: what are they saying?

g. All language learners should keep a language journal -- don't worry so much about the grammar, but keep a record of what's going on in your life day by day. Write down your experiences using English -- Who did you speak to? What did you speak about? Did they understand you? Did you understand? What new words did you learn? (Hold onto it. You'll be surprised at how much your English improves with time. It's also something your grandchildren may enjoy reading some day.)

For more ideas on developing language learning activities outside the classroom, see Experiential Language Teaching Techniques.

Bibliography:

Action English Pictures. Takahashi, Noriko and Maxine Frauman-Prickel. Alemany Press. 1985; Hayward, Ca.

These **reproducible** picture series provide learning material for students acquiring the vocabulary and structure of the language. The book uses the Total Physical Response approach to language teaching. The introduction contains a good overview of TPR and outlines steps for facilitating it.

Can't Stop Talking. Rooks, George. Newbury House Publishers. 1983; Rowley, Ma.

Intermediate students are presented with decision-making tasks. The tasks lend themselves well to small group work. Each task is accompanied by a photograph relating to the question at hand.

Decisions. Bowers, Barbara and John Godfrey. Dominie Press, Ltd. 1985; Agincourt, Ontario.

Each chapter introduces a problem in anecdotal form. This anecdote is followed by specific problem-solving activities, many of which are done in groups, as well as specific language exercises such as CLOZE and Sentence Combining, based on the situation.

Drawing Out. Bassano, Sharron and Mary Ann Christison. Alemany Press. 1982; Hayward, Ca.

As John Schumann says in the foreword to this book, "[This] is really two books. One is a methodology text which presents techniques designed to get students to produce art work which they can then comment upon orally and in writing. The second is an actual collection of student art work and interlanguage productions." It has wonderful suggestions and is very enjoyable to read.

Experiential Language Teaching Techniques. Jerald, Michael and Raymond C. Clark. Pro Lingua Associates. 1983; Brattleboro, Vt.

The advantage of these activities is that they involve the learners in the language spoken in their communities. The "field work" sections encourage students to go out and practice the language by carrying out tasks in the target language. Thus students practice real language as opposed to realistic language.

Index Card Games for ESL. Clark, Raymond C., Ed. The Experiment Press, Pro Lingua Associates. 1987; Brattleboro, Vt.

Talk-A-Tivities. Yorkey, Richard. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. 1985; Reading, Ma.

A collection of communication-generating activities with **reproducible** pages for student use.